

**ALASKAN WAY VIADUCT AND SEAWALL PROJECT
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS 2/25/02-3/12/02
FEBRUARY 25TH, 26TH, 27TH, 28TH AND MARCH 5TH**

Public comments were received at a series of open houses held in late February and early March as well as from e-mails sent in via the website and directly to the project e-mail account. The public was asked to comment on four of the proposed alternatives for retrofitting or replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall, including which options were preferred in the north, central, and south areas of the corridor and the reasons for that preference. The following summary should not be viewed as a statistically valid sampling of the regional population. Rather, the summary should be read as comments submitted by those members of the public who selected to visit an open house or the website, viewed information about the potential design plans, and chose to submit comments.

COMMENTS RECEIVED BY VENUE 2/25/02-3/12/02:

2/25/02, Downtown Open House:	168
2/26/02, Burien Open House:	65
2/27/02, Ballard Open House:	141
2/28/02, West Seattle Open House:	148
3/05/02, Shoreline Open House:	32
Email to viaduct@wsdot.wa.gov :	50
Website Create your Own AWV Plan:	122
Mailed to WSDOT:	22
TOTAL:	748

Total Attendees for all Open Houses: 800

NORTH AREA OF THE CORRIDOR

The majority of people made choices of which north option they preferred for one of three main reasons: cost; the route was direct and thus seemed safer; or because it reconnected the street grid in the south Lake Union area and provided greater pedestrian access. Generally, most liked the concept of integrating the seawall with the plans where possible.

Total number of people who made a north area selection=466

Option A 135—29% of the total
(Stacked cut-and-cover from Harrison to Bell)

For those who selected option A in the north, cost seemed to be one of the largest factors. Many believed that this would be the most cost-effective solution of all the options presented. Others expressed that it seemed the least complicated to build and that mined tunnels were too expensive. Some commenters took this opportunity to express that they did not like any of the options, as all were tunnels of some sort.

“Cut and cover seems more economical than a mined tunnel.”

Option B 55—11% of the total

(Mined tunnels from Aurora to Lenora with a single-lane cut-and-cover tunnel along the north waterfront)

For those who selected option B in the north, they did so primarily for two reasons: it is a straighter, more direct route, and it seems safer.

“Straighten access via tunnel, seems safer than the other alternative.”

Option C 87—19% of the total

(Mined tunnel from Harrison to Pine with a single-lane cut-and-cover tunnel along the north waterfront)

For those who selected option C in the north, they did so because of its direct route, fewer curves, and the best access. Commenters also liked the fact that it is underground and reconnects the street grid in the south Lake Union area.

“I prefer the efficiency of the direct diagonal.”

Option D 189—41% of the total

(Stacked cut-and-cover tunnel from Aurora to Pine generally along Alaskan Way and Broad Street)

For those who selected option D in the north, the primary reason was that it reconnects the waterfront and creates greater pedestrian access. People spoke of urban plazas and open space and appreciated the fact that it would also reconnect the street grid in the south Lake Union area, bring about some improvements to Mercer Street, and simultaneously fix the seawall.

“Reconnect S. Lake Union and Seattle Center/Uptown and create a promenade along the bay for the benefit of the city and Belltown.”

CENTRAL AREA OF THE CORRIDOR

The central section is where the strongest opinions were expressed. There was a split between those who thought the views from the viaduct should be preserved with one of the aerial options, A or B, and those who selected either C or D because they wanted to reconnect downtown to the waterfront. Most of the strongest opinions about keeping an aerial structure through the central section came from residents who live in West Seattle, however, they were not the only ones who expressed an interest in maintaining the view. Those who wanted to keep an aerial structure felt very strongly that the viaduct was a part of the Seattle landscape that should be kept, that it improved people's quality of life, and was a public “treasure.”

Those who were interested in preserving an aerial structure also feared that, if the aerial structure was removed, the newly available land would be sold to private developers and redeveloped for private uses, thus losing public land.

Those who live and work in downtown Seattle or close to the downtown area, generally agreed that downtown should be reconnected to the waterfront and turned into a more pedestrian-friendly public space. These commenters most often selected the options C or D, which includes a cut-and-cover tunnel along the waterfront. Many also recognized that the chance to make this connection is a once in a lifetime urban design opportunity and a chance to develop a “front door” to Seattle that could rival ports worldwide.

Total number of people who made a central area selection=501

Option A 151—30% of the total
(Two-level aerial structure from Bell to Holgate)

People who selected option A in the central section did so because they want the view from the viaduct preserved. Commenters noted that the viaduct was “the people’s view,” and the “poor-person’s” luxury view. They said the feeling they received while driving the viaduct improved their quality of life and instilled civic pride, reminding them why the City of Seattle is such a great city. Commenters also mentioned that they did not want to drive in tunnels and thought the aerial option would ultimately be safer.

“I absolutely do not want to lose my view. This plan preserves the view while traveling for countless citizens. I’m sure the upland property owners would favor a tunnel, but not I!”

Option B 47—9% of the total
(Single-level aerial southbound and cut-and-cover northbound from Lenora to Holgate)

People who selected option B in the central section did so primarily to preserve the views while driving on the viaduct and also because it integrated a seawall solution with the cut-and-cover tunnel.

“This keeps some of the views of the viaduct and fixes the seawall.”

Option C 124—25% of the total
(Stacked cut-and-cover tunnel along the waterfront from Pine to King)

People who selected option C in the central section want the downtown area to be reconnected to the waterfront. They think that this option is more aesthetically pleasing and will be much more pedestrian friendly. The other factors for selecting this option were that it will be much less noisy and it also incorporates a solution for the seawall.

“I like the idea of putting as much underground as possible so long as the public retains much of the area on top as open space.”

Option D 179—36% of the total
(Stacked cut-and-cover tunnel along the waterfront from Pine to Holgate)

Much like those who selected option C, people who selected option D in the central section want to reconnect downtown and the waterfront. They had a great desire for open space for public use, pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths, and parks. They also liked the fact that this option incorporated a seawall solution.

“Returns waterfront edge to the city—connects historic Pioneer Square to waterfront—movers noise and fast movers underground and repairs failing seawall.”

SOUTH AREA OF THE CORRIDOR

Generally, people felt the least passionate about this section of the viaduct. Most of the commenters wanted to use this as an opportunity to save money, which will be needed in other areas of the corridor. People tended to have less knowledge of this area as well and were more likely to defer to whatever option would work best for the Port of Seattle, the railroad companies, and other businesses in the area. Commenters also said that if the Port wants to connect directly to the rail, improving their efficiency, the Port should also pay for it.

Total number of people who made a selection=482

Option A 109—23% of the total

(Side-by-side aerial structure from Holgate to Spokane on east side of SIG yard along Utah Street)

People who selected option A in the south typically cited that they thought it would be the most beneficial to the Port and the best solution for industrial use and freight movement. They also like the fact that it makes use of the ground space and would allow for parking. There were those who made this selection because it maintained the view while driving and chose aerial options in other areas of the corridor.

“Possible cost sharing with Port of Seattle. Port would have direct access between container areas and trains”

Option B 99—21% of the total

(At-grade section along the existing alignment from Holgate to Spokane)

People who chose option B in the south thought this would be the most affordable and that it represented the closest thing to current conditions in this area. Some also said this was a good idea because it provides the most flexibility for changes that might be desired in the future.

“Lower cost by basically maintaining existing roadway at grade.”

Option C 107—22% of the total

(Stacked aerial structure along the existing alignment from King to Holgate; side-by-side aerial structure along the existing alignment from Holgate to Spokane)

People selected option C in the south because they wanted to preserve the view and they thought that it would be beneficial for freight mobility.

“Have some view before the tunnel.”

Option D 167—34% of the total

(At-grade section along the existing alignment from Holgate to Spokane)

People who selected option D for the south generally thought that we should save money on this section of the viaduct and put it towards other areas. They also thought that this would be safer in an earthquake.

“No need to spend money to elevate a section that is at grade now. Save the money to spend elsewhere on the project, or better yet, spend it to improve and connect a bike path to West Seattle.”

MAIN THEMES

Cost

Many of the commenters expressed an interest in knowing what the relative costs of each of the design plans are. They want to know where the money is coming from and how much each person will pay. It was not uncommon to have a commenter express that their decision would be made solely on cost if they knew what they were. A smaller number of commenters echoed Secretary MacDonald’s sentiment in thinking first about what the right plan is before determining out how it will be funded. Tolls were mentioned by many, with most commenters supportive of them, sometimes begrudgingly. The main concern raised by those who commented directly on the proposition of tolls was the affect that a tollbooth would have on traffic flow. Though there were some commenters who voiced strong opposition to “user fees,” the primary reason people were opposed to the concept was the fact that their commute in the morning would be adversely affected.

“Costs of each plan and retrofit BEFORE decisions are made!”

Land Use Along the Waterfront

Most of the comments, whether people were supportive of the aerial structure or tunnels, did not want the land under the viaduct to be sold to private developers. Many of those who support the idea of an aerial structure through the central portion of the corridor, do so not only to maintain the view but also because they are fearful that if it does not exist, the land will be redeveloped as condominiums or other private development. The majority of people who are supportive of reconnecting downtown to the waterfront want to see the land remain public. They favor pedestrian walkways, parks, bicycle paths, benches, and urban design that will attract not only tourism, but locals as well. There were only a handful of comments about private development as a means to generate revenue to pay for the project.

“I practically use the viaduct daily but I would give anything to have a waterfront that is an asset to the community. Don’t preserve the idea of an aerial structure to keep the view. The view would be so much better from a park. A cut and cover project makes more sense for safety, noise, quality of life. And to combine it with the seawall, it seems more financially viable.”

“I love the view from the current viaduct and want to keep that. It is one of the few daily opportunities a lot of us have to see that kind of panorama. I cannot afford a view from my home so I love the view from my commute. I believe that the only people to

benefit from the loss of the viaduct will be developers and the rich who can afford the downtown view property.”

Tunnel Safety

It was made clear in the comments that many people do not like the idea of driving in tunnels, whether mined or cut and cover. Some people fear for public safety and think that, despite what “experts” say, tunnels are not a good place to be in an earthquake, fire, or other disaster. Others simply do not want to be underground in a dark place when what they are accustomed to is driving along the viaduct.

“I have a fear that a tunnel would be very dangerous in an earthquake because of the risk of flooding. I also worry that a tunnel could end up with hidden damage in an earthquake –it’s much easier to inspect and repair an above ground structure.”

Traffic: Current Volume and Capacity, Plans for During Construction

Many commenters took this opportunity to suggest that in addition to fixing the viaduct, capacity should be added as well. There was a sense that some are hoping that this project will be able to address more than just the viaduct by also solving other Seattle traffic/circulation issues. There were contradictory opinions submitted that expressed a desire to not add capacity, but instead incorporate effective mass transit options. Lastly, there was a concern about what would happen during construction with people being dependent on certain travel patterns to get to work. Commenters from West Seattle felt particularly concerned due to their geographic vulnerability.

“I am a West Seattle Resident and engineer that uses the viaduct daily. The gridlock after the earthquake when the viaduct was closed was horrible and entirely unacceptable. It took 1 1/2 hours to go 7 miles. It normally takes me 12 minutes with the viaduct. My concern is not only the cost of the repairs/replacement of the viaduct, it is also the huge traffic mess that will be created during construction.”

Effective Mass Transit

Whether it is the monorail, light rail, or some other mode of transportation, many think that an effective solution for the viaduct also includes some form of mass transit that would be coordinated simultaneously with replacement of the viaduct.

“You should actively incorporate transit into the design and construction of this corridor. I see that you await further planning of Monorail and propose extension of the toy streetcar, but this presents an opportunity for WSDOT to partner up and show it’s committed to moving people and goods farther than cars and trucks.”

WHAT OTHER ISSUES SHOULD THE PROJECT BE CONSIDERING?

Cost/Budget

Commenters expressed an interest in knowing what the different plans will cost. Many felt that they could not answer the question of what option they preferred unless they knew how much it was going to cost. Some thought that it was a good idea to not try to make the plan fit the budget but to establish a vision that everyone can agree to and then determine its costs.

Parking

Some commenters expressed a concern about the parking currently underneath the viaduct and what would become of it in the new plans.

Safety

Many commenters are concerned about the integrity of the current structure and want whatever it is replaced with to be safe.

Retrofit

Some commenters inquired about the retrofit option and expressed a desire that it remain a consideration due to its potential for a less costly solution, less disruption, and leaving the aerial structure intact.

Access in Central Area

There was some concern expressed by commenters regarding access into the central area. Some think that if there are too many on-ramps and off-ramps the central portion will no longer function as an efficient bypass or effective alternative to I-5.

Tolls

There were mixed feelings about tolls and it was mentioned by a significant amount of people. Some are adamantly opposed to user fees of any kind but more commenters were opposed to them because of the effect that a tollbooth would have on traffic flow. Others thought that tolls were an appropriate way to pay for this project.

Length of Construction

Some mentioned concern about the length of construction; affect on traffic and businesses along the waterfront.

Regional Circulation

A few people wondered if improved access and connections to I-5, I-90, etc. would create a bigger circulation problem on the viaduct once the project was complete, particularly if capacity is not added and there is still a lack in effective mass transit.

WHAT ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU? (1-LOW AND 5-HIGH)

Noise

Total responses=329

138 commenters felt this was of high importance (42 %)

74 commenters felt this was of medium importance (22%)
117 commenters felt this was of low importance (36%)

Aesthetics/Views

Total responses=361

265 commenters felt this was of high importance (73%)
42 commenters felt this was of medium importance (12%)
54 commenters felt this was of low importance (15%)

Traffic during construction

Total responses=349

171 commenters felt this was of high importance (49%)
88 commenters felt this was of medium importance (25%)
90 commenters felt this was of low importance (26%)

Waterfront access

Total responses=340

185 commenters felt this was of high importance (54%)
71 commenters felt this was of medium importance (21%)
84 commenters felt this was of low importance (25%)

Access to downtown

Total responses=353

207 commenters felt this was of high importance (59%)
86 commenters felt this was of medium importance (24%)
60 commenters felt this was of low importance (17%)

Downtown mobility

Total responses=336

183 commenters felt this was of high importance (54%)
79 commenters felt this was of medium importance (24%)
74 commenters felt this was of low importance (22%)

Pedestrian/bicycle trails

Total responses=340

178 commenters felt this was of high importance (52%)
46 commenters felt this was of medium importance (14%)
116 commenters felt this was of low importance (34%)

Transit usage

Total responses=349

217 commenters felt this was of high importance (62%)
63 commenters felt this was of medium importance (18%)
69 commenters felt this was of low importance (20%)

HOW MANY TIMES A WEEK DO YOU USE THE VIADUCT? (EVERYDAY, 4-5 TRIPS, 2-3 TRIPS, DO NOT USE, OTHER)

Total responses=359

Everyday	73	(20%)
4-5 Trips	83	(23%)
2-3 Trips	164	(46%)
Do not use	23	(6%)
Other	16	(5%)

DO YOU USE IT MORE TO ACCESS OR BYPASS DOWNTOWN?

Total responses=344

Access	99	(29%)
Bypass	190	(55%)
Both	55	(16%)